

# ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING SKILL BY USING RESEARCH PAPER WRITING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

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## ABSTRAK

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah (1) untuk menginvestigasi apakah penggunaan Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials dan meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis paper/artikel jurnal penelitian; dan (2) untuk menginvestigasi situasi kelas ketika Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials diterapkan sebagai materi ajar di kelas. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam kategori penelitian tindakan kelas. Penelitian tindakan ini dilakukan pada mahasiswa semester IV Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro tahun akademik 2014/2015. Penelitian tindakan ini dilakukan dalam 2 siklus. Setiap siklus terdiri atas 4 tahapan, yaitu: tahap persiapan, tahap pelaksanaan, tahap observasi, dan tahap refleksi. Data yang diperoleh dari penelitian tindakan ini berupa data kualitatif dan data kuantitatif. Data kualitatif diperoleh dengan menggunakan teknik observasi dan interview. Sedangkan data kuantitatif diperoleh dengan cara tes. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials dapat meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis paper dan juga meningkatkan motivasi mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran menulis akademis. Dengan demikian dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials dapat meningkatkan ketrampilan menulis akademis mahasiswa dan juga situasi kelas.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials, menulis akademis*

## 1. Introduction

Regardless of their major, university students are required to compose different types of writing, such as term papers or exam answers, throughout their studies. Moreover, the students must write a research paper as their final project at the end of their study in university. The students will be considered to pass or fail from their study depending on this research paper. Moreover, the Directorate of Higher Education (DIKTI), every year, also always offers many kinds of grants for students in order to develop students' ability in expressing their ideas and the results of their scientific activity in the form of scientific article based on the criteria or standard of writing scientific journal (Ditlitabmas Dirjen Dikti, 2014: 24)

The status of writing in language teaching has accelerated tremendously since 30 years ago. According to Richards (2001), in the teaching of writing, the sequence of activities typically involves: (1) familiarization: learners study grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text; (2) controlled writing: learners imitate given patterns, often from substitution tables; (3) guided writing: learners manipulate model texts; and (4) free writing: learners employ the patterns they have developed to write a letter, a paragraph, an essay, and the like. Writing in a second or foreign language is regarded as one of the most difficult skills for a learner to master,

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particularly in free academic writing. The difficulty is due to the need to generate and organize ideas using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization and to turn such ideas into a readable text (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

Writing course is a compulsory subject which is taught in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, East Java, generally in 8 credits which are distributed in 4 semesters, each semester 2 credits. In writing 4, the teaching and learning process is focused on academic writing to prepare the students to be able to write their final project at the end of their study. The goal of this subject is mainly to make the students to be able to write scientific writing in term of article of research report with appropriate content, good organization, correct diction, grammar, and mechanics.

Based on the pre-cycle study, it was found that the students get difficulties in academic writing. These difficulties were indicated by both the low score of students writing skill, their scores are in range of 50 – 68; and supported by the result of interview to the students. The students get difficulties in academic writing since there are limited sources of materials which are appropriate to be implemented and challenging materials. The teaching materials are a hundred percent taken from printed books which are available in the market, in which these books in some cases are not really relevant to the students. The students also said that they felt bored with the materials used. Besides, they also said that there was no challenging activity during the teaching and learning process. The lecturer usually teaches them by explaining the textbook materials, then, asks the students to write based on Instruction in the book.

Based on the result of pre-cycle study, then, I conducted some analysis dealing with the results found. The researcher concluded that the problems faced by the most of students in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in academic writing were caused by the monotonous teaching material used and the lack of challenging activities that could motivate students during teaching and learning process. There should be teaching materials that teach students how to write ELT research paper in detail, such as: writing a topic and title; gathering information; writing an introduction; developing main paragraphs; quotations, paraphrasing and summarizing; commenting on data; writing a conclusion; writing a review; writing an abstract; writing references; revising and editing texts. Besides, there should also teaching materials that combine challenging activities and relevant materials.

To overcome those problems, I proposed to use Research Paper Writing Instructional Materials in teaching academic writing in English Education Study Program of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2014/2015.

This research paper writing instructional materials do not only teach relevant materials but also ask the students to do a research (a mini research) dealing with english language teaching as pre-writing activity. Conducting a research is a challenging activity that could motivate students during teaching and learning process since the students will write scientific writing based on facts that they found in their mini research.

Based on the background above, the formulation of research problems are (1) Can research paper writing instructional materials improve students' academic

writing skill of the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2014/2015?; And (2) How is the class situation when research paper writing instructional materials are implemented in teaching academic writing at the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2014/2015?

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

Academic writing is a general term that refers to all writing created for the purpose of study (Chin, Khoizumi, Reid, Wray, & Yamazaki, 2012). University students are evaluated largely based on their writing, so writing skill is essential for academic success. Chin et al. (2012) state that academic writing is different from other types of writing in several ways, they are: (1) purpose: academic writing is mainly purposed to demonstrate knowledge of a topic; (2) audience: it refers to the reader of the writing; (3) evidence; (4) style; and (5) the process of writing.

According to Guthrie, Johnson, Pfaff, and Hildebrandt (2012: 2) Instructional materials are those items such as books, other printed matter, video and audio recordings, computer software, and digital content which are used as part of the instructional process. While the format of instructional materials has evolved and will continue to change, the purpose remains the same.

Maryland State Department of Education (2014) defines instructional materials as a variety of materials in any format which influence the student's learning and the instructor's teaching. They include, but are not limited to, textbooks, library books, periodicals, pamphlets, art prints, study prints, pictures, transparencies, films, filmstrips, slides, videocassettes, videodiscs, audio cassettes, sound recordings, compact discs, computer software, CD-ROMS, and electronic resources.

Based on the definitions above, it can be synthesized that instructional materials mean textbooks and other materials written and published for use by students in instruction that are required or essential to students' success in a course of study. Instructional materials are divided into printed and non-printed instructional materials. Printed instructional materials refer to materials that are printed in book or other printed form. Non-printed instructional materials mean instructional materials in formats other than print, and includes instructional materials that require the availability of electronic equipment in order to be used as a learning resource, including software programs, video disks, and audio tapes.

Referring to the definition above, research paper writing instructional materials for academic writing course are resource materials that teachers can use when planning and carrying out instruction. The materials focus on research paper writing. The materials teach students how to write research paper well. These instructional materials are used to teach academic writing for students in higher education.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This study belongs to classroom action research which was conducted through two cycles. Action research develops through self reflective spiral: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (McNiff, 1988: 27). McNiff (1988: 2) says that action research is the name given to an increasingly popular movement in educational research. It encourages a lecturer to be reflective of his own practice in order to

enhance the quality of education for himself and his students. It is a form of self-reflective inquiry that is now being used in school-based curriculum, professional development, school-improvement schemes, and so on, and it is actively involves lecturers as participant in their own educational process. Therefore, in order to conduct an action research, I must have the ability to become self-reflective in solving the problems that he is dealing with. This design was considered as the most appropriate design since the purpose of this study was concern to the students' behavior improvement.

The population of this research is the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2014/2015 which consists of 60 students, divided into two classes.

In this study there were two kinds of data: qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected by observation and interview. Observation was done when the teaching-learning-process took place, before the lecturer used Research paper writing instructional materials to teach academic writing and after the lecturer used Research paper writing instructional materials in teaching academic writing. It was to know the students' skill and the students' difficulties in academic writing. Then the observation was continued by focusing on the use of Research paper writing instructional materials in teaching academic writing. Here, I observed the activity by myself since I am actually the lecturer of writing class. The second technique of collecting qualitative data was interview. It was done by interviewing the students after the teaching-learning-process to add the data.

The quantitative data were collected by a test. The test was done to measure the students' writing skill which was obtained from writing test before the lecturer used Research paper writing instructional materials to teach academic writing (pre-test) and after the lecturer used Research paper writing instructional materials to teach writing (post-test).

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1 Pre-research Situation**

The problems of students in the fourth semester of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro were dug up through observation, interview, and pre-test. From those three things conducted, there were two main problems. The first is writing skill problem to write research paper and the uneffectiveness of teaching and learning.

The first problem is students' writing skill to write research paper. Based on the pre-test score that was low, 42,67 – which is below the passing grade 60, then it can be concluded that the writing skill was low.

From the effective point of view, there are some points to be considered: the students' attitude and the class situation. First, the attitude – the students said that academic writing is difficult and boring. The materials and classroom activities were the same every day. Second, the class situation – there was no interaction in the class. The only interaction was teacher-centered. There were no activities except the teacher explanation in front of the class.

To measure the improvement of the students, there are some indicators of writing skill and the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The indicators of writing are: content, organization, diction, grammar and mechanics. The indicators

for the effectiveness of teaching and learning process were taken from Brown's principles (2003). They are automaticity, meaningful learning, the anticipation of reward, intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, language ego, self-confidence, risk-taking, the language culture connection, the native language effect, interlanguage, and communicative competence.

## 4.2. Post-research Situation

### 4.2.1. Improvement in Writing Skill

Since this research belongs to classroom action research, I conducted this research based on the cycles of CAR. In each cycle, I did planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. I conducted this research in two cycles because after I conducted observation and reflection in the first cycle the result was not enough although there was significant improvement in class situation. The students' scores after cycle 1 were still could not achieve the passing grade.

The implementation of Research paper writing instructional materials in academic writing class followed some certain steps in doing academic writing. According to Chin, et.al, (2012: vi) successful academic writing often cannot be achieved in one try. Certain steps should be followed before and after writing to ensure that ideas are presented effectively. Those steps are pre-writing, writing, editing, and re-writing. In **pre-writing activities**, all students, in group of 4-5 students, conducted a mini research dealing with English Language Teaching. I gave them a freedom to choose their own topic as far as it is still in the area of ELT. Then, they also read some examples of ELT research paper and identified the structure of the paper. Besides, I also guided them in conducting their mini research and explained to them about the generic structure of research paper. The students conducted their mini research in about 2 weeks. Then, the results of their mini research were used as sources of their project in academic writing class. After some activities in pre-writing, then the students started **writing phase**. In this phase, students individually wrote the results of their mini research into a paper (research article). Then, after finishing the research article, the students, in group of 4-5, started **editing** their research article. They checked their writing based on content, organization, diction, grammar, and mechanics. After editing phase was done, the students individually started rewriting the research article. The last, the students submit their works to be evaluated by the lecturer.

After conducting the research in two cycles, the followings are the average scores comparison of students' academic writing skill after pre-test, post-test of cycle 1 and post-test of cycle 2.

**Table 1. Average Scores Comparison of Students' Writing Skill after Pre-Test, Post-Test of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2**

No.	Indicators	Pre-test	Post-test of	
			Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1.	Content	13.65	15.13	15.67
2.	Organization	8.27	11.45	14.33
3.	Diction	8.27	11.92	14.32
4.	Grammar	8.87	11.92	15.83
5.	Mechanics	3.62	5.00	5.00
<b>Sum of Average Scores</b>		<b>42.67</b>	<b>49.47</b>	<b>65.15</b>

Comparing the result of pre-test, post-test 1, and 2, there were some indicators of writing skills improved. They are as follows:

The first indicator is content. The pre-test result was 13.65, then post-test 1 result was 15.13, and post-test 2 result was 15.67. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing research paper with appropriate content was improved. The students who firstly can write research paper with *showing no knowledge of subject, non-substantive, not pertinent, or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write research paper with *limited knowledge of subject, little substance, and inadequate development of topic*.

The second indicator is organization. The pre-test result was 8.27, then post-test 1 result was 11.45, and post-test 2 result was 14.33. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing research paper with good organization was improved. The students who firstly can write research paper with *no communication, No organization, or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write research paper with *somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, and logical but incomplete sequencing*.

The third indicator is diction. The pre-test result was 8.27, then post-test 1 result was 11.92, and post-test 2 result was 14.32. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing research paper with correct diction was improved. The students who firstly can write research paper with *essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary idioms, word form or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write research paper with *adequate range, occasional errors of word/ idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured*.

The fourth indicator is grammar. The pre-test result was 8.87, then post-test 1 result was 11.92, and post-test 2 result was 15.83. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing research paper with correct grammar was improved. The students who firstly can write research paper with *virtually no mastery of sentence constructions rules, dominated by errors, no communication or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write research paper with *major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and/fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused/obscured*.

The fifth indicator is mechanics. The pre-test result was 3.62, then post-test 1 result was 5.00, and post-test 2 result was 5.00. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing research paper with correct mechanics was improved. The students who firstly can write research paper with *frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting meaning confused or obscured*, are now able to write research paper with *demonstrate mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing*.

#### **4.2.2. The Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning**

The effectiveness of teaching and learning would be said good when it has the twelve teaching principles of Brown (2003). The measurement of the effective teaching and learning was by the researcher during the implementation of collaborative writing technique. The results are as follows:

##### **1) Automaticity**

When the students discuss with their partners, they started speaking English as much as possible. They were unconsciously using English in the classroom. When the lecturer asked some questions in English, they would directly raise their hands

and answered in English. It could be seen in each meeting that when the lecturer asked, or ordered something they could answer them well.

#### 2) Meaningful Learning

The chosen material of Research paper writing instructional materials helped the students to face the real world situation. They were forced to think on their own research; they have to take a stand on an issue, support their stand with solid reasons, and support their reasons with solid evidences. Besides, they must work collaboratively with their partner and discuss together. Therefore, it could be said that the activity in the classroom had reflected the principle of meaningful learning.

#### 3) The Anticipation of Reward

During the teaching and learning process, the lecturer also gave reward for those who could write research paper well. The reward is their articles/papers would be included to follow the grants held by the Directorate of Higher Education (DIKTI) in the category of PKM-AI. They were proud of the reward and the reward had directly changed their motivation and their mood for the day.

#### 4) Intrinsic Motivation

Due the students cheered with their achievement and the activities such as conducting mini research, they started to compete with their friends in class. They wanted to get reward. Their motivation seemed higher than before.

#### 5) Self-Confidence

Through Research paper writing instructional materials, the students were asked to collaborate with their friends in conducting mini research that would be used as sources in writing research paper. They also discussed together. These make the students' self-confidence higher.

#### 6) Risk-Taking

Students' risk taking could be seen in their attitude toward the activities. The students actively used English in their discussion and conversation in the classroom. Not only in discussion, but also the students actively involved in conducting mini research. These made the students started writing research paper confidently.

#### 7) Strategic Investment

This principle was clearly seen when all the students actively doing mini research and discussion. They had to do a research thoroughly and to wait their turn to express their opinion patiently in discussion. They also had to listen and respect their friends' opinion, and to finish all tasks given by the lecturer well. They would do something that they thought was became their investment of language.

#### 8) Language Ego

The chosen activity of research and group discussion meant to be challenging but at the same time improving the effective level. The lecturer should overtly display attention to the students to make the students believe that the lecturer would be there to help anytime they need him. The language learner should be treated with tender loving care and patience. When the lecturer asked questions and no one answered, the lecturer would find a way to make the students understood about what he said.

#### 9) Language Culture Connection

It is generally agreed that language and culture are closely related. Language can be viewed as a verbal expression of culture. It is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Language provides us with many of the categories we use

for expression of our thoughts, so it is therefore natural to assume that our thinking is influenced by the language which we use. The values and customs in the country we grow up in shape the way in which we think to a certain extent. This aspect could be seen from the result of students' writing in research paper. The students wrote their papers based on the research results in ELT. This researches were done based on the condition and culture in Indonesia. Therefore, it can be inferred that there was a connection between language and culture in teaching academic writing using Research paper writing instructional materials .

10) The Native Language Effect

The translation method that students used usually would be a big obstacle for this principle to appear. Therefore, as the lecturer it was a challenge to make the students understand that not everything about "Bahasa" system would cause error. The lecturer had tried to trigger the students to think in English instead of translating it to comprehend and to write the language.

11) Interlanguage

The principle of interlanguage gave the students to correct their error themselves. The students should learn to correct their mistakes with the guide from the lecturer. When the students could correct their mistakes, it is a good indicator to conclude that students' language abilities are alive and well.

12) Communicative Competence

The communicative competence deals with the chosen materials that was grammatically, sociolinguistically, and functionally acceptable in the daily life. One example is when the students had to write research paper based on the research they had done.

**Table 2. The Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning Process Based on Brown's Principles (2003)**

No.	Indicators	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
1.	Automaticity	-	√	√
2.	Meaningful Learning	-	√	√
3.	The Anticipation of Reward	-	√	√
4.	Intrinsic Motivation	-	√	√
5.	Strategic Investment	-	√	√
6.	Language Ego	-	√	√
7.	Self-confidence	-	√	√
8.	Risk-taking	-	√	√
9.	Language Culture Connection	-	√	√
10.	The Native Language Effect	-	√	√
11.	Interlanguage	-	√	√
12.	Communicative Competence	-	√	√



## 5. Conclusions

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that Research paper writing instructional materials can improve students' skill in academic writing and improve class situation (effective teaching and learning) of the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2014/2015.

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